

## MAYFLOWER I

## Mayflower Now a Barn

(On April 6 in 1975 Parade Magazine was asked what happened to the famous Mayflower. The Clipper is, in this issue, publishing the magazine's answer, as well as facts about the Mayflower that Parade Magazine didn't know. — Ed.)

A - No one knows for sure. After the cold winter of 1620-21 in Plymouth Harbor, the *Mayflower* set sail for England on April 5, 1621, and reached London safely. She was apparently in the port of London again in 1624, after which her history is uncertain because of confusion with several other contemporary ships of the same name. Some historians believe she was dismantled after her master and quarter-owner Christopher Jones died. Others believe that one William Russell bought the vessel for salvage and used the hull as a roof for his barn in the village of Jordans, outside London. If her journeys after Plymouth remain a mystery, her course through history has held steady for the past 350 years.

Over the years, the *Clipper* published items about the *Mayflower*. Here are some of them:

(The following article by Mabel Love appeared years ago in *The Christian-Science Monitor*. — Ed.)

"Good-bye for now, I'll be back again," bellowed Christopher Jones, intrepid master of the *Mayflower*, as he prepared to set sail for home and England in the early spring of 1621, leaving behind all that were left of the 102 Pilgrims he had contracted to bring to the New World in September of the previous year.

"That is probably the last of Captain Jones and the *Mayflower*," William Bradford, self-appointed leader and later Governor of Plymouth Colony, told the Puritans who had risked their all in their quest for religious freedom.

As it turned out, Captain Jones died the following year and from that time on the fate of the *Mayflower* was obscure for many years.

Now owned by the Society of Friends in England it has been dry-docked as a barn all these years in the small Quaker settlement of Jordans, which lies 20 miles or so outside London. There are no gaudy lights above the door, nor even signposts directing tourists to an inspection of the building, since it is not the way of the Quakers to engage in ostentation. Local tradition has long recognized the fact that here is actually the remains of the most famous ship in American history.

The original cost of red paint has been dulled by the years to the appearance of charred ebony, while the

Duxbury Clipper, Wednesday, May 8, 1986

interior presents the startling effect of a skeleton of some prehistoric monster, since the boat rests upside down upon a brick foundation, the still seaworthy hull serving as a roof.

## Simple Explanation

The explanation of how the ship came into possession of the Quakers is simple. In the days when the *Mayflower* sailed the seas it was a custom among farmers to buy ships sold as salvage when no longer fit for nautical duty. This was the only way they could get good oak for first claims on oak were reserved for the navy, and even second-hand oak was highly prized for building purposes.

According to port records in London, the *Mayflower* was owned jointly by Christopher Jones and 3 others. After the captain's passing the other owners joined his widow Johanna in applying to the British Admiralty in 1624 to appoint an appraiser so they could sell the ship as salvage.

Yellowed port records show it brought around \$500, although worth 10 times that amount. The ancient bill of sale also reveals that the 5 great anchors brought less than \$100, while someone also picked up a heavy iron pitch pot and iron kettle together for \$2.60.

Purchased by a Buckingham farmer, William Russell, the ship was transported to his land where it was carefully reassembled as a shelter for his livestock.

Sometime after the Society of Friends was founded in 1652, farmer Russell sold all of his property to them. The brick-floored farmhouse kitchen served as one of the first meeting places of the religious group. It was from this property that a group of worshipping Friends, including William Penn, were dragged off to prison in 1670, although their leader, George Fox, protested vigorously, "Our only crime is that of worshipping according to our own conscience."

The farmhouse, although later replaced by a fine brick meeting place, still exists, used now as a motel.

(The following article ran in the *Clipper* in 1950. — Ed.)

What happened to the *Mayflower*? Where are the sturdy oak timbers of the vessel that brought the Pilgrims to this country more than 3 centuries ago?

They are part of an old barn that stands 25 miles outside London. "The tiny vessel that brought America's founding fathers to Plymouth Rock," says a writer, "ended up in the quiet Buckinghamshire countryside as an ordinary shelter for ordinary cattle and ordinary hay."

He found the barn after a 40-minute train ride and a

15-minute walk. "The walk was the best part, for the patch wound through lovely groves of beech and holly, along old country fences, and finally into a peaceful little Quaker settlement named Jordans. Here, one of the local inhabitants, a pipe-smoking book editor named Arthur Hayward, took me to see the barn. You'd never find it unless somebody pointed it out. There aren't any signs, even on the barn itself. Englishmen in general, and Quakers in particular, don't believe in that kind of thing."

This barn stands on a site once occupied by a Quaker hostel. Today, it is a community hall for the hostel. Is it held sacred? Well, no smoking, fire or electricity is permitted, but the locals play badminton in it. They also have lectures, meetings and concerts in it. They complain that sometimes during concerts swallows fly in "and the rustle of their wings bothers the singers."

The barn measures 20 feet by 60. The uprights and beams are clearly from a ship, bowed and bent in the shape of a hull. The framework of the barn like a ship's skeleton, upside down. One upright has a bit of the original iron keel on it.

Two foot-long pieces of the historic wood have been removed. The first was presented to the Pacific Highway Association, and now is in the Peace Portal which marks the highway's entrance to Canada. From the second, tiny models of the *Mayflower* were carved and given to FDR and Winston Churchill.

(The late Henry Cragin Walker wrote his version on the same subject — Ed.)

A great many people would like to know what became of the historic *Mayflower*.

Years ago Dr. Hamilton Holt, president of Rollins College in Florida, in England visited the little Parish of Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire, where Milton wrote some of his poetry and William Penn is buried. There he discovered an old barn that had been built of a part of the frame of the *Mayflower*, near a Quaker meeting house. He obtained a slab from it and brought it home. It now rests over a mantel in a room of Mayflower Hall, Winter Park, Fla. The barn was built about 1624 and what was left of the *Mayflower* was sold for \$650. The slab Dr. Holt got had carved on it the word, "Harwich," which was the English port of registry for this famous ship.